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UNCLAS YEREVAN 002026

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/CBA, EUR/CACEN, EUR/ACE  
USTR FOR KATRIN KUHLMAN  
DHS FOR JANET LABUDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF TRADE TO CUSTOMS  
COMMISSIONER BONNER

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs transmitted the following letter to the Embassy September 13, 2004. The original English language text follows.

BEGIN TEXT:

03/09/2004

Mr. Robert C. Bonner  
Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Department of Homeland Security  
Government of the United States of America  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC  
20229

Dear Commissioner Bonner:

I am writing to you to express my concerns with respect to US Customs treatment of exports to the United States of clothing articles manufactured by an Armenian textile manufacturer, Hayas Group OJSC, a respected Armenian company which for more than ten years has manufactured clothing articles in Armenia for export to many countries around the world. Indeed, I am surprised at what appears to be prejudicial treatment by US Customs officials of an Armenian exporter given the long-standing close relations between the Governments of the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America.

At this time, US Customs officials in New York and Los Angeles are detaining a number of shipments exported by Hayas Group to Hilltop Industries Inc. of Irwindale, California. The US Customs officials requested information to confirm that the clothing articles exported from Armenia by Hayas Group were manufactured in Armenia, and not simply transshipped through Armenia from other countries. Hayas Group has provided extensive information to Hilltop Industries to confirm the manufacturing operations it has conducted in Armenia in the production of these clothing articles, which Hilltop Industries has in turn furnished to the US Customs officials. The US Customs officials, however, are apparently not satisfied and have made oral requests for additional information but, apparently, they have refused to give any written confirmation of the specific information they require.

I consider this situation to be most distressing, especially given the significant resources the Government of the United States has invested in the development of a viable market economy in Armenia. I request therefore that you review this matter with your officials to ensure that Hayas Group is not unfairly prevented from exporting to the United States the clothing articles it manufactures in Armenia.

I will be pleased to provide to you any additional information you may require. Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

/s/

Karen Chshmaritian  
Minister of Trade and Economic Development Republic of Armenia

Cc: The Honorable John M. Evans  
Ambassador of the United States to Armenia

END TEXT

EVANS